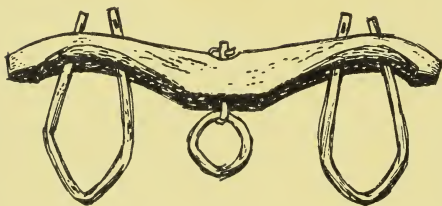


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The Story of Abraham
Lincoln's assassination.

LINCOLN ROOM



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The Story of
Abraham Lincoln's
Assassination

Yours truly



D. J. Richards

By D. J. RICHARDS
"Dad the Rambler"

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Lincoln

Room

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

February 12th, 1809-1930

One hundred and twenty-one years ago, according to the vague records of the event, Abraham Lincoln was born. A child of the southern wilderness, his character was moulded and wrought in an environment of loneliness, sorrow and privation. His heart bled from early youth until under the weeping skies of a sad April morning in 1865, it was drained of its last crimson drop. The joys of the world never knew him, to happiness he was a stranger, life's burdens clung to him with ever-increasing weight until death struck them from his tired shoulders. The great duties that came to him were duties of pain and sorrow; the triumphs he won were triumphs that crushed his soul with grief.

Looking back upon his strange career, it almost seems as if the man walked or stalked across the stage of life with a crown of thorns upon His brow, bearing a cross to his calvary, beholding the world through a mist of tears. He loved his country unselfishly; he served it nobly and with unfaltering faith. His spirit knew neither malice nor hatred; no impulse of hatred ever sought refuge in his bosom. He was gentle of speech, sympathetic, charitable, compassionate, patient, tender, brave. Destiny made him the broken-hearted commander-in-chief of an embattled Nation turned against his native south land; duty drove him through the tragic ordeal; and at the end fate struck him down and left his estranged kinsmen bowed and dumb over his prostrate form.

History reveals no counterpart of Abraham Lincoln. In body, heart, soul, and mind as well as the fateful career that God marked out for him. The world has had no other like him (save one), among all its sons that have led mankind from Eden down to this present time. The Pyramids may sink beneath the desert sands, the temples of earth crumble into dust of ages, the fame of the Caesars vanish in the darkness of oblivion; but surely as long as the race

endures it will behold, in the familiar figure of this martyred son—strange, gaunt, silent, colossal, with agony written in the lines of his kindly face and love glowing in his wistful eyes—the saddest, gentlest and most pathetic figure in all human history.

These words, written by the talented and gifted George M. Bailey, of the Houston Texas Press, gives in a nutshell, as it were, a complete composite picture of that one whom we today look upon as the Saviour of the Nation—Honest Old Abe—the martyred President—Abraham Lincoln. It is not my purpose to say anything of his life. I leave that to others who, some of them at least, were intimately acquainted with him. I cannot say that I ever met or saw him except that night that followed, what the people of this Nation were beginning to think as the dawn of a brighter day in our history. It is of that night and events that followed that I wish to relate—being one of the only two now living, of the audience present at the time of the President's assassination on April the 14th, 1865. The other being Uncle Joe Hazelton, living in the Glendale Hospital, who was a boy of 11 years at the time.

THE STORY OF APRIL 14TH, 1865

I was a boy, in my 15th year. A student of the Columbia-Pennsylvania Classical and Military Institute. It was my last year and because of my good record and a reward my Father, Mr. David Richards, one of the Pioneers in the Iron Industry of this country, at the time General Manager of the Maltby-Case Rolling Mills at Columbia, promised, should I pass examination, he would take me with him when he went after an Uncle of mine who was then in one of the hospitals in Washington. At that time he thought to be able to see the President himself, by reason of the fact that he (Father) had taken an active part in the second campaign, speaking with Hon. W. D. Kelly known as Pig Iron Kelly in the states of Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York. Father was known as the "Blair County Puddler." Of course I was told that I would not only see the President but would also have the chance of taking his hand. The boys of the Institute were envious of me and many wished that they could have my trip.

After the surrender of General Robert E. Lee, and the surrender of Richmond it was only a question of a few days when Peace would come to a Nation that had been almost torn asunder by the ravages of war. There was great rejoicing especially in the North. President Lincoln had as it were, lain aside the sword sheathed it in its scabbard and was holding out both hands, one bearing an olive branch, the other the dove of peace. His great heart went out in sympathy for the defeated. General Grant had arrived in Washington on the 13th of April for the purpose of making arrangements for disbanding of the most part of the army. That day was spent in general rejoicing. After taking part in the services of that day and after being excused from further duties connected with the program for the day, Father and I left on the night train Washington bound. All along the line, out in the fields in the country, at the depots, we found bonfires burning, crowds at every station shouting and huzzaing. On reaching Washington on the morning of the 14th we found the people wild with joy.

We stepped from the train about eight o'clock that morning.

The first thing that attracted my attention was the profuse decorations seen on all sides. On our way to the National Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue, we heard bands playing lively music, soldiers and sailors marching to and fro. Men and women as they met each other on the sidewalk would embrace each other and looking heavenward exclaim "Thank God the war is over, now we can be friends again." Houses all over the city almost covered with bright bunting and at night as brilliantly lighted as possible—remember we did not have electric lights in that day.

After securing a room at the hotel and something to eat we called up Mr. Kelly, our representative, who came to see us; and shortly after his coming we were told that the President was with his cabinet busily engaged in trying to solve the problem of the hour, so that we would not be able to see him, perhaps for several days. We were also unable to get my uncle from the hospital. The Adjutant General, from whom we were to get the permit was also busy, so we spent the best part of that day in sight-seeing, getting back to the hotel in the late afternoon. Seeing a copy of the evening paper and in looking over it I found an item that I thought would interest Father. This was a notice to the public informing them that President Lincoln, Mrs. Lincoln, General and Mrs. Grant would be at Fords Theater that night to witness the play of the "American Cousin," it being the thousandth night—nine hundred and ninety-nine nights in New York—this being the thousandth, but the first night in Washington. This night was also to be a benefit one to Laura Keene, the leading lady of the play. I immediately called Father's attention to the news item, then he turned to the clerk of the hotel and asked, "Is there any chance of getting two tickets for the show tonight?" The clerk replied, "I don't know. The ticket scalpers have bought up the house. If you get tickets for tonight you will have to pay a stiff price for them." "Well," said Father, "see what you can do for us." Then turning around to me he said, "I guess this will be our only chance to see him,

Dai." Shortly after the clerk informed Father that he could get two tickets but that he would have to pay \$2.50 each for them. The tickets were procured and a few minutes before eight o'clock we were seated in the theater. We sat about the center of the auditorium. It was the first time for either Father or myself to be in a regular up-to-date theater building. It is not necessary for me to state but that for a time I was all eyes, taking in what appeared to be "fairly land" to me. I looked about me, seeing the ground floor, the galleries, the stage, but especially the boxes on either side of the stage. I noticed the first row of boxes with a partition between, making two boxes which were on a level with the floor of the stage, then above this on the right there was another box, the partition had been removed from this, turning the two boxes into one. The extra decorations was a notice that this was to be the President's box.

At the hour of eight, the time of the rising of the curtain and opening of the play, the audience seemed to be restless and when the curtain went up there was much dissatisfaction and considerable complaints heard. That great audience, many of them like ourselves, there to see the President more than the play, felt they had been imposed on and so paid but very little attention to the play, becoming more and more irritated at themselves for being such fools as to part with their money just to see a play that ordinarily would not cost them more than from 25 to 50 cents to see at any other time. I might mention here that they did not give one a synopsis of the play in those days—they had programs that gave the names of those who took parts and what particular character they were to portray. The theatrical people of that day expected one to come again and again, if they would get a full conception of the play.

It was about 8:22 p. m. when a signal was given from the front to the orchestra leader, of the arrival of the President and party. The orchestra at once playing "Hail to the

Chief," and as the party entered, the audience rose to their feet, we did too, then on looking to the right we saw Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln, Major Rathbone, Miss Harris, and several plain clothes men, coming in and going toward the special box. General and Mrs. Grant had decided at the last hour to go north—he to New York and she to New Jersey to visit her son then in school. Mr. Lincoln appeared at the front of the box with his old stove-pipe hat placed on his left breast, when he bowed to the left, center and right, then took his seat, and the play continued.

I afterwards learned that the Jewelers Association of America met in convention at Washington later in the year, and at one of their sessions they passed a resolution to this effect: Resolved, that from and after this date all signs of dummy watches or clocks, indicating the jewelers business, shall show on their face the hands pointing to that time, 22½ minutes after eight, it being about the time when the President came into his death—entered the theater.

A few minutes after ten o'clock there was a pause or break. It was generally understood that some one of the cast had forgotten their cue. This, I believed the cause until the year of 1921 when I found the reason for the break. I was sent a clipping from the New York Times to this effect: "Died in the Old Actress Home, Mrs. Catherine Evans, age 91. She was one of the cast in the play of The American Cousin. It was her turn to come on but as she came through her dressing room door, a nail caught in her dress, and she went back to have it sewed up." On telling this over Radio KFJ on the 12th of February, 1928, a letter was sent by a lady living in Seattle in which she desired to thank the speaker, saying that as she listened in she imagined she heard her mother's voice—who had passed away only seven weeks before—telling the story she had so often heard; then she added my mother was maid and companion to Mrs. Evans, and was the one who sewed up the rent.

During this pause a man rode up in the rear of the theater, dismounted from his horse, came up back of the stage, and went at once to the President's box. The plain clothes men on guard, knowing him to be John Wilkes Booth, a well known actor of the day, and presumably acquainted with the play, and thinking that he was going in to tell the President of what had occurred before the party came in and keep them posted as the play continued, just gave him a passing glance and allowed him to go in, then turned toward the stage to see what was coming next. Booth went in and passing quickly to the rear of the President, fired his pistol, a Derringer, the bullet striking the President near the base of the brain. He dropped his gun and then went to the front of the box and leaped over on to the stage.

In the meantime the audience was waiting and when they were about to give signs of impatience there appeared in the center of the stage, coming from somewhere, but they did not know at the time, a man. This man fell on one side, caught himself, then stood before the audience, with a dagger in his uplifted hand cried out "Sic temper Tyrannis" and then immediately went back of the screen or curtain. Many in the audience recognized him and thinking he had taken the part intended for another—he himself was not one of the cast—they began to applaud, and kept that up for sometime.

During this, a second pause, there was seen a man walking quickly on the right hand side aisle. He went to a man sitting on the rear seat and tapping him on the shoulder said, "Come quick the President has been shot." This Major Surgeon, for such he was, arose and both went toward the box. At this time Major Rathbone who had at first, hearing the shot and seeing the President slump down in his chair, came to the front of the box and cried out as he pointed to where Booth had gone, "Catch that man." Then it was that a gentleman sitting next to the Surgeon Major

realized what had been done and he sprang to his feet on to his chair and shouted at the top of his voice, "The President has been shot." Then there was a rush made for the stage and had it not been for Mr. Ford standing up with uplifted hands saying in a loud clear voice, "John Wilkes Booth has shot the President, gone to the rear of the theater, mounted his horse and is on his way to the Long Bridge to go into Virginia," there would have been a stampede and no doubt many would have been hurt and perhaps some killed in the rush. The house was soon cleared, troops and police coming in. The body of the President was then taken to a house opposite the theater and there remained until morning, where at a little after seven o'clock, April the 15th, he breathed his last.

Secretary Stanton, the aristocratic Secretary of War, who had learned to love and respect Lincoln for his sterling worth and qualities, forgot the President's lowly and humble origin, placing his hand on the dead man's brow and raising his other hand towards the heavens said, "He now belongs to the Ages." It seems now that it was a prophecy which is being fulfilled more and more as the years go by. It may be as time goes on, the American people may forget the name of Washington, as the Father of our country, but as long as time will last the name of Lincoln will be remembered as the Saviour of the Nation and for which he gave his life blood.

After the President's death his lifeless body was taken to the White House and there remained until the morning of the 19th of April, where a short service was held. Then it was taken to the Capitol, and laid in state until the 21st, after which it began its journey of 1500 miles, reaching Springfield on the 3rd of May, where the body was viewed by thousands, and on the 4th of May laid away in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield, Illinois. All along the way of the funeral train there was an outpouring of the people,

and expressions of sympathy, sorrow and sadness shown, such as never witnessed before. Truly a great man had fallen.

On the morning of the 18th of April, 1865, the two passengers of the 14th—father, uncle and son—were again on the train bound homeward. The Washington they left was not the same they first saw. Instead of gay bunting, lively music, huzzaing of the people, there was a stillness that could be almost felt. The houses deeply draped in morning, drums muffled, funeral dirges filled the air, men and women meeting each other spoke in whispers. Strong men with bowed heads and tears streaming down their cheeks was no unusual sight as they spoke of the Martyred one. Many men who before had spoken of him as the “Yankee mud-sill,” the “black abolitionist,” “traitor to his Southland,” coupled with curses, knew naught but words of praise and approval now. What will become of us was the question of the hour? It was at this time there came the voice of a man who stood off a mob that were about to wreck the “New York World” building, who being in New York at the time, was called on, thinking his presence might have an effect on the mob. General Garfield it was, afterwards President and another one of our Martyred ones. Repeating a few passages from Holy writ he closed by saying, “While the President is dead we should remember this truth that God and the Government still lives.” The mob broke up and retired to their homes.

As we from time to time look on the face of Abraham Lincoln seeing that sad look, the wrinkled brow and marks of care written all over his countenance, we cannot help but think if the words of praise, the beautiful bouquet of flowers being daily placed on his grave had been placed in his hands when living, and heard the voice of cheer while engaged in his work, what a difference there would have been in his looks, and that reminds me:

*"If with pleasure you are viewing, any work anothers doing,
If you love them, if you like them, tell them now;
Don't withhold your approbation, till the preacher makes
oration,
And he lies with sunny lilies o'er his brow;
For no matter how you shout it, he won't know a thing
about it,
He won't see the tear drops you may shed;
If any praise is due him, while he's living give it to him,
For he can't read his tombstone when he's dead;
More than fame and more than money, are the comments
kind and sunny,
And the hearty warm approval of a friend;
It will give to life a savor, make him stronger, make him
braver,
Give him heart and spirit to the end;
If any praise is due him, while he's living give it to him,
Let the hearty word of hearty warm approval now be said;
Don't wait till life is over, and he is underneath the clover,
For he can't read his tombstone when he's dead."*

BOOTH'S END AND BURIAL

When Booth the assassin sprang from the box after having shot the President, his spur caught in the flag that was used in the decorations which caused him, as he reached the floor of the stage, to turn on his ankle spraining it so bad as to make it impossible for him to travel at day keeping himself hid until night when in pain he kept going. Had it not been for this he might have got to the Confederate lines; but as it was, he did not get any further than a place called Port Tobacco, now Bowling Green, near the Maryland and Virginia border line, before he was caught up with by Lieutenant Baker and a posse of men. He was found hid in a barn belonging to a man by the name of Garrett. The men surrounded the barn and demanded that he surrender. Booth said he would never come out of there unless as a dead man and then insolently told the Lieutenant that he had two carbines and plenty of cartages which he could use and furthermore said I'll get a dozen of you before you get me if you come through the door. I am safely entrenched behind some tobacco and I dare you to come in. Then an order was given to fire the barn. When one end was burning Booth shifted to the middle of the barn. Then an order was given that kindling be got and the other end of the barn fired. The barn like other tobacco barns had wide cracks between the boarding and Booth leaning heavily on his crutch raised his carbine intending to shoot the first one that came in line with his sight. Sergeant Brown Corbett, one of the posse from Kansas, looking through the cracks on the other side of the barn, seeing Booth with his raised gun and knowing Booth meant business, rammed his gun through a knot hole and fired the shot that was to end the life of Booth. The bullet struck Booth very near the same spot as that fired by him at the President—in the rear of the head about the base of the brain. Then some of the posse rushed in and brought him out of the barn and took him to the porch of Mr. Garret's house, where for nearly two hours and a half he suffered intense pains not only of body but mind as well. He was conscious most of the time after being

shot until the last breath. Among other things said by him, he was heard to say, "Tell mother I died for my country. I did what I thought was for the best." His last words were "Useless, useless." Then just as the morning sun brilliantly lighted up the awful scene, he passed away dying in the very state—Virginia—whose motto he had disgraced.

At various times there have been newspaper notices appearing in different cities and states, stating that the man shot in the barn was not Booth but some other man. Again the place of his burial has been questioned. One of the reasons given as his identity is that the relatives and friends of Booth would never have made such earnest appeals for the body had it not been Booth. They certainly would not want the body of a stranger. This in my opinion settles the question as to the certainty of it being Booth and none other. As to where the body was buried and why, the reason for it being considered best that no one should know the spot is explained in this way—first, it was commonly rumored by some that his body was buried somewhere in the burial ground of the Old Capitol Prison ground, the exact spot not known. The second lot of opinions was that his body was taken one night when it was dark, wrapped up in canvass, heavily weighted with irons and then taken down the Potomac until the party reached deep water and then and there thrown over board. One reason assigned for the place being secret was that it might be that there would be some fanatics, who if they knew of the place, might make of it a shrine. There were some men living then that were like one man, wealthy, having a beautiful home with large lawn in front of his home, living in one of the larger cities of the Southland, who erected a monument and on it was inscribed the words, "Sacred to the memory of John Wilkes Booth, who died for his country." This monument was standing up to the time of the last Great World War. Some of the soldiers encamped there in looking over the city, seeing the monument, out of curiosity went up and after finding what it was, reported their find to their comrades, who declared that such a thing should no longer disgrace Ameri-

can soil. These men, some of them sons of the Southland, others from other parts of our now united country, went after dark and destroyed it, literally grinding it in to dust that the wind carried away. Some six years ago, in 1923, a man who was a soldier in the Union army, and at the time stationed in Washington, died. In looking over his papers there was found a sealed envelope marked, "Not to be opened until after my death." It was opened and there was a sworn statement to this effect: This contains something which I swore I would not divulge as long as I lived. Then followed these words, "I the undersigned with four other men and Lieutenant Baker, on the night of Booth's burial—naming the men—took the body of J. Wilkes Booth, wrapped in canvas and heavily laden with iron, and took same for some distance down the Potomac River and there it was thrown overboard. I can not state the exact spot, but we knew it was in deep water. After thus disposing of the body we returned to Washington, reaching there at sunrise." An effort was made to find the men mentioned, but it was learned that all had passed away. In their search however, they did discover the witnesses that had signed as to the signature, but they, when questioned, stated, "Of course we had some curiosity to know what the document contained but the old man simply said, that you will not know until after I am dead. This to my mind is the truth regarding his place of burial. Many rumors were current after the assassination as to who was behind this dastardly act. But after every effort made, it was found that the whole diabolical scheme was originated by Booth who had gathered a number of others about him to carry out not only a plan to kill the President, but members of the cabinet as well. In fact an effort was made the same night that the President was shot, to take the life of Secretary Seward while in his rooms at the hotel where he was living.

As an evidence of the truth of the story of Booth's death, the following is given, coming from a gentleman residing at San Diego, Calif. It was written after hearing the story over Radio KHJ, February 12th, 1928, and the writer

states: "Gentlemen, please thank Mr. Richards on my behalf for the story of Lincoln's assassination as told over your radio station today. I knew personally, one of the members of the squad that captured Booth, and his account of that affair tallied with that told by Mr. Richards."

* * *

May I close by saying if there was a need for men in this Nation of ours in the days past, there is a greater need now, and the prayer of every true American should be, "God give us men and women at this time in our Nation's history as well as in the history of our State and City."

A time like this demands great faith, strong hearts and willing hands;

*Men and women wanted who have honor; who will not lie:
Men and women wanted whom the spoils of office will not buy:*

Men and women wanted who will stand up before the demagogue,

*And damn his treacherous flattery without blinking;
Men and women wanted who live above the clouds in public life and private thinking.*

With such men and women as this then we expect greater homes, greater states, greater cities and communities. Then we may see, and not till then, a Nation that will be great, not in the sight of men and other nations, but great in the sight of Him who is the ruler of the universe. May we remember that—

*That Nation's great that fears the Lord,
Whose songs are measured by his Word:
Where justice rules twixt man and man;
Where love controls in act and plan;
Where breathing in his native air,
Each soul finds joy and peace in prayer.*

Thus may our Nation ever great, be God's delight, man's best estate. May He—the Almighty One—be with us every moment, every hour, uphold and keep us by His Almighty Power.

Yours very truly,

“DAD THE RAMBLER.”

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Los Angeles, Calif.

CRESCENT PRINTING COMPANY
825 West Pico Street
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